

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
February 8, 2022 (held virtually via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Nobles Crawford, Ass't. Chair; Jumirna Alcober, Daniel Bonilla; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Edda Santiago; Nayma Silver-Matos (Public Member). **Absent:** Alexis Marnel (Public Member). **Other Board Members:** Daryl Cochrane, Steve Simon. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials:** Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa, Kiana Diaz & Jamilah Sandoval (staff).

Agencies/Organizations: Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum & Library; Niria Leyva-Gutierrez, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance; Shiloh Holley, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Rachel Cytron, RowNY; Rosa Yolanda Pineda, Conectemonos; Bob Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Frances Hall & Steven Harris, Inwood Canoe Club. **Also Attending (30 members of the Public in attendance):** Genesis Abreu; Ann Afnan; Solanly Almanzar; Christina Alphonso; Trish Anderton; Dinora Aparicio; Thomas Betts; Denise Canniff; Tessa Carter; Nahies Castro; Gislaine Fertullien-Edwards; Erica Filpo; Janet Finkelstein; Yareli Flores; Adam Fran; Ira Gershenhorn; Bernard Grobman; Arianna Jimenez; Eileen King; Paul Kittas; Kadia Kone; Susana Macias; Yosaira Matos Santana; Keltha McAulay; Lizbeth Mendez; Ricardo Miranda; Mishal Nawaz; Sky Pape; Jaylene Pena; Bryant Yumbra Castillo.

1. The meeting was called to order at about 6:33pm by the Chair, with welcome, opening remarks, updates & announcements.

- Last month's Committee resolution on the Lighthouse Link passed 40-0-1-1.
- No announcement yet from Parks on the Ft. Tryon Park restaurant concession, though it is expected imminently. After a concessionaire is announced it will then proceed to the NYC Franchise Review & Concession Committee for final approval.
- Parks asked to defer their Ft. Washington Park bench presentation to our March 8th meeting.
- EDC, which had made a last-minute request to present a brief update on the Immigrant Research & Performance Art Center (IRPAC), one of the requirements of the Inwood Rezoning, also asked to move their presentation to the March 8th meeting.

2. Brief programming updates from cultural & friends-of-parks orgs <6:48pm>

- **Niria Leyva-Gutierrez (NoMAA):** The first cycle for applications for small grants (\$2.5-5k) to CB12M individual artists in various disciplines of art closed yesterday. Next cycle deadline is May 9th; visit our website (nomaaanyc.org) for more information. The 20th Uptown Arts Stroll poster contest is underway for Washington Heights/Inwood/West Harlem artists. Prizes: \$1,250 grand, \$500 2nd, & \$250 3rd. Online application at artstroll.com; deadline March 27th. We invite everyone to become a NoMAA member: sign up to receive our weekly newsletter or submit your own arts+culture events to our online calendar. Visit our new studios at 4140 Broadway, available for rent Monday-Sunday, 9am-7pm. Info: www.nomaanyc.org / info@nomaanyc.org.
- **Alexander Campos (Hispanic Society):** Hispanic Society made a presentation to CB12 Land Use regarding ADA accessibility to the main building. It was well received and a resolution is forthcoming. "Nuestra Casa: Rediscovering the Treasures of the Hispanic Society," featuring various paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, textiles, maps, and documents from the collection opens to the Public Thursday, 2/17 and closes Sunday, 4/17. (Hours: Thurs-Sun, noon-6pm). Gallery Tours being planned for Saturdays with free admission. From 3/8-5/8, Elena del Rivero: Women's International Day Two Flags on the Terrace. Andrea Arroyo's Solidarity Banners on the Terrace in collaboration with the Morris-Jumel Mansion & NoMAA opens to the Public on Wednesday, 4/6 and closes 6/5.
- **Shiloh Holley (Morris-Jumel Mansion):** New self-guided tour option: the Northup Experience, featuring a look at the Mansion from the perspective of Anne Northup & her children, the family of *12 Years a Slave* author Solomon Northup, who worked at the Mansion for Eliza Jumel for approximately 2 years in the 1840s. Join us at the Mansion on Saturday, 3/12, 1pm-3pm for a Community Exhibition Open House: Sun Print workshop with the artist (1pm-2pm) followed by an artist meet-and-greet at 2pm.
- **Rachel Cytron (RowNY):** RowNY hopes to break ground on the new Sherman Creek boathouse in late spring or early summer. As part of this project we are required to remove the Peter Jay Sharpe boathouse; we have almost completed the permitting process. It is sinking and can no longer be used.

Liz said this was an interesting opportunity for community engagement and, frankly, pretty cool, and asked if the removal date and time could be publicized so that people could watch. Rachel agreed that's a great idea and will see if that can be arranged; it's not up to us to set the date. Ira Gershenhorn asked where it will be going? A: Boston Harbor.

- **Frances Hall (Inwood Canoe Club):** Despite frigid temperatures the boathouse remains active during winter. We're closed to the public, but members have been onsite daily for paddling & maintenance, including storm preparation, ice/snow removal, and fleet maintenance. Once air temperatures rise, we'll resume work on the restoration of two centuries-old wooden canoes in our fleet. This past November several of our members brought the historic boats to the Wooden Boat School at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston to begin restoring them seaworthiness. We can't wait to finish the job and show them off at the boathouse and on the river. Uptown Paddling, Inc., the non-profit affiliated with ICC, is planning to offer a course to local teens in competitive team paddling this summer and is communicating with several Washington Heights & Inwood youth programs. Our objective is to field a team in inter-club competitions this summer. If your group is interested in participating or supplying funding, email uptownpaddling@gmail.com. When you're near the water, keep your eyes out for winter wildlife! Recent sightings include bald eagles and bufflehead ducks. We've also had reports of a harbor seal, though we're not sure if it's Inwood's celebrity seal, Sealy.
- **Rosa Yolanda Pineda (Connectemonos):** We continuing to work to connect three public spaces: the W. 186th St. Basketball Court, Highbridge Park's Juan Bosch Plaza, and the 3-acre DoE-controlled space behind GW Educational Campus, where Superintendent Ramirez approved an Urban Farm in January 2020. Our long-term goal is to connect these spaces by bringing cultural relevant family programs with the significant involvement of young people, as agents of change. We to continue to rally the support of the CBM12, elected officials and various NYC Agencies to work collaboratively with Connectemonos towards this goal. Our short-term goal is to obtain permits from the Parks Department and the sound system from the 34th Police Precinct to bring a series of movie nights to the area near Juan Bosch Plaza. Jennifer suggested that the Wallenburg Playground would be better suited to this as there is more paved area, easy access to electricity, and a comfort station. Also reported that we had been running Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) in Highbridge, and they got funding to extend for 17 weeks to include the period from November-March.
- **Paul Kittas (Public):** Urban Park Rangers are doing semi-monthly tours of the Highbridge Tower; I am now a permitted/licensed guide and will be conducting tours of Coogan's Bluff.

3. Brief NYC Parks report (Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Administrator) <7:02pm>

- Announced several upcoming events, including Inwood Hill Park stewardship/trail maintenance, NYC Mountain Biking Assn. trail day on the second Saturday of each month in Highbridge Park, Urban Parks Rangers Water Tower tours, bald eagle watch on 2/19 @ 9am (meet at Payson Center on Dyckman St.), a winter birds workshop 2/20 @1pm, and various kids programs during the school winter break (2/22 & 2/25, both at 1pm). Many other programs online/virtually: www.northernmanhattanparks.org/events.
- Mayor Adams has appointed a new Parks Commissioner, Sue Donoghue, former Assistant Commissioner under a previous Mayor during which she lead the PlaNYC initiative; most recently President of the Prospect Park Alliance. Mayor Adams also appointed Bronx Borough Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa as first Deputy Parks Commissioner.
- Fort Tryon Park's dog run will close later this month for 3-4 months for repairs due to erosion, silt build-up, and general use since opening 20 years ago. The project will also repair a large sink hole and is funded primarily by the Fort Tryon Park Trust, as well as \$8k from the community for fencing repair.

- Gorman Park received some additional attention: as part of the Deputy Mayor's SWARM Project, we had two days of large Parks crews start to clear out some of the dumping and overgrowth in anticipation of the upcoming retaining wall repair.
- Public Question (Adam Fran): Is there an update of the West Side Greenway repair date? A: The contractor for the HHP Greenway retaining wall repair project is pulling permits from State DoT and other agencies. This project is part of a multi-site contract which also includes retaining walls in Ft. Tryon Park (Bennett Avenue), Gorman Park, and St. Nicholas Park (not in CB12). Since St. Nicholas Park is ready-to-go the contractor is proceeding with that. The good news is that the contractor thinks the Greenway project will be a very limited closure lasting only one month.
- Thanks to City Capital Funding from the former C/M, Parks will be redoing the W. 186th St. Basketball Courts site, to improve the play surface and to support additional youth & community programming with social seating, a learning garden and water service. NYC Parks' Capital Division is working w/Conectemonos & the C/M to schedule a Public Scoping Meeting later this or early next month.
- Nobles asked about the permitting process for ballfields and special events. A: Generally established leagues with good records of compliant use get priority for re-application, but we do also leave openings for non-league permits. For special events (parties and other gatherings) you can go online (nyc.gov/parks) and follow the menu; there is a \$25 non-refundable application fee. It's important to do it as early as possible to secure your preferred date/location and avoid conflicts. Liz added that it's helpful to be as specific and flexible as possible in terms of time, date, and place, so you have options if your first choice isn't available. If you are looking to do a branded event with sponsorship and vending, that's a different process through NYC Parks' Citywide Special Events/Marketing Division. Steve Simon added that permit applications must be submitted at least 21 days in advance – there are thousands of applications for Manhattan alone – and submission even further in advance is better. (This helps both NYC Parks and the applicant, as they'll get more lead time to know if their event is approved or not.)

4. Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa: vision & priorities for our parks <7:22pm>

C/M De La Rosa is a life-long resident of Washington Heights & Inwood with experience in government (former Assemblymember; former C/M Chief of Staff). She also re-introduced her Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislation and Budget, Kiana Diaz, and her Director of Community Affairs, Jamilah Sandoval.

C/M De La Rosa's approach/vision to Parks/Cultural Affairs stewardship is to assess what we already have, and try to make the process for allocating funds more fair and transparent. One "silver lining" of the grueling rezoning process is an influx of funding being applied to our parks, open spaces and cultural infrastructure. She sees herself as a watchdog, ensuring the new administration is accountable and makes good on those commitments.

Regarding Participatory Budgeting, OMB informed her they do not track the budget allocation and spending history for individual projects but group all PB funding into the Capital Budget reporting. In the interest of full transparency she has asked for a report of how CD10's prior PB dollars were spent. Because the deadlines were so close to the beginning of her term she isn't participating in this cycle, but will in the next cycle; this will allow more time to get the word out and to increase participation.

Some specific projects on her radar include: the Inwood Hill Park Nature Center; the Anne Loftus Park Playground; Monsignor Kett Playground's comfort stations (currently funded and in procurement); recreational ballfields & basketball court lighting and field repairs; and Gorman Park, which she hopes to prioritize in this budget. She was heartened to hear of the Board's recent resolution in support of the

Lighthouse Link project. Liz also mentioned that the Little Red Lighthouse itself needs renovation and hopes that can be one of the C/M's priorities. The upcoming Fort Tryon Dog Run renovation is also a project she is tracking closely. She mentioned the Open Streets program and environmental impact solutions (waterfront work, Sherman Creek, etc.) in our community, and the continued effort on supporting infrastructure (e.g., retaining walls, pathways, etc.) In terms of expense funding the C/M strongly supports adequate funding to provide upkeep, safety and maintenance for our parks.

From a cultural affairs perspective, the Councilmember is excited for the Immigrant Research & Performing Arts Center (IRPAC), one of the commitments of the Inwood Rezoning, and intently is watching the outcome of the Peoples Theatre Project's program planning process. She also is very interested in creating more links for our local artists to get more public exposure to their work and is looking forward to supporting organizations that help in this pursuit.

Councilmember De La Rosa and her team are looking to creating an all-encompassing strategic plan for our neighborhood that will guide the work of her office. **A robust Q&A followed.**

- Ira Gershonhorn: Re Participatory Budgeting, will you be using the same online format as in the past? It's a great way to get real time community feedback. A: we are re-looking at how best to do it in light of COVID. There are advantages to physical presentations of PB projects, and are looking to make that aspect more accessible. Online voting is also being evaluated.
- Rosa Yolanda Pineda: is the Raul Wallenburg Playground approved for capital project funds? A: It hasn't yet been allocated for NYC capital funding but is on my list of priorities.
- Alexander Campos asked if the C/M's strategic planning includes the Hispanic Society which serves her constituents but is outside of her district. A: I defer to D7 C/M Shaun Abreu as it's his district and already am in discussion with him.
- Daryl Cochrane voiced concern on the way in which NYC elected & agencies consider and determine the re-/co-naming of parks, streets, and other public facilities. He hopes the C/M will champion a more transparent and collaborative process that includes the public and the local community. A: I am very much in favor of this; explained progress in identifying stakeholders.
- Sally Fisher: to what extent will you track allocations to ensure they are spent as promised? A: We have a Capital Project list dating back to 2018, but only have last year's Expense report. There is work to be done on the tracking side. The C/M broke down the different pots of Expense funding and the difficulty in tracking them all. If you would like an update on specific expense projects, please contact Kiana Diaz.
- Liz Ritter: since CD12 has more parkland than any other in the City – about 40% of acreage – plus miles of shoreline, the importance of environmental protection and infrastructure development cannot be overstated. We also need adequate expense funding for operation of all of these facilities: capital improvements are of little use if they cannot be maintained. Lastly, can we revive "Uptown Treasures," an event which highlighted various cultural institutions within CD12M and provided special programming at each site and transportation between them. A: Agreed on the importance of expense funding. Conversations on a program like Uptown Treasures are in process; we will keep you updated.
- Barbara Frazier: Shared both fond recollections of and enthusiastic support for "Uptown Treasures".

There being no old or new business, **the meeting was adjourned at 8:04pm.** (Motion by Barbara Frazier; second by Nobles Crawford; no objection).